

STRATEGIES FOR PLAYGROUND COMPETITIVE BEHAVIORS

During play, children practice their power to self-direct, self-organize, exert self-control and negotiate with others (Bergen & Fromberg, 2009). When play involves competition, it is reported by students to be highly enjoyable (Opie, 1993). However, healthy competition can exist only when those playing the game agree on the rules, work to enforce and abide by the rules, and accept the consequences of breaking the rules. Cooperation is therefore necessary for effective competitive games (DeVries, 1998). Competitive behaviors may become aggressive with increases in provocation (Berkowitz, 1989) and these competitive and aggressive behaviors can occur regardless of whether a student is winning or losing in a game (Santor, Ingram & Kusumakor, 2003.) Some children (usually boys) use competitive aggression to achieve status and dominance (Estell et al., 2002).

STRATEGIES FOR DECREASING COMPETITIVE BEHAVIORS

- Before recess, review the expectations and school rules for behaviors for specific games that have been problematic
- Teach students how to have fun and learn something new each time they play
- Teach students strategies for coping with angry, aggressive and competitive feelings
- Give students opportunities to practice both winning and losing during a game
- Students having difficulty with competitive behaviors can fill out a 'Sportsmanship Problems Worksheet' together to discuss what happened and how to fix it

STRATEGIES FOR INCREASING SPORTSMANSHIP

- Give sportsmanship a definition
- Develop a sports code of conduct (charactercounts.org)
- Come up with examples of heroes who exhibit sportsmanship qualities
- Formally teach fair play, for example in Physical Education class
- Practice role playing good sportsmanship with students

EVIDENCE-BASED INTERVENTIONS

- Strong Kids for Grades 6-8 (Merrell, 2007) teaches social emotional learning, including a lesson on "solving people problems."
- Children's Friendship Training (Frankel & Myatt, 2003) about social interactions and includes a unit on "rules of good sport."
- Fair Play for Kids (Gibbons, Ebeck, & Weiss, 1990) aims to increase the moral development and prosocial behavior of children in physical education.